

Panel Denounces Cost of Antimissile Research

By DAVID E. SANGER

After a three-year study, a panel of analysts said yesterday that the program for a defense against missile attack should be vastly scaled back to a low-level research program, much as it was before President Reagan called for an all-out effort in 1983.

The report was prepared by the Council for Economic Priorities, a non-profit group interested in public affairs that has been among the most vocal detractors of the anti-missile effort. The results of its study are contained in a book, "Star Wars: The Economic Fall-out," released yesterday.

The book, which makes some of the first detailed projections of the cost of both research and deployment of the system, concludes that last year 84 percent of the growth in Federal research programs was related to the anti-missile effort under Mr. Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. The book suggests that the program threatens to skew Federal research efforts and to draw scarce scientific talent into a program that may have few commercial spinoffs.

"A \$39 billion five-year program is not likely to bankrupt an economy producing more than \$4 trillion worth of goods and services each year," the report concluded. "Nonetheless, this kind of investment entails a significant opportunity cost: It consumes money that could be spent in many other areas."

The report was endorsed yesterday by William E. Colby, a former Director of Central Intelligence, and Paul C. Warnke, formerly the chief United States arms agreement negotiator. It was timed for release just as Congress is in the final days of negotiating the 1988 budget for the program.

Yesterday, a House-Senate conference committee recommended a \$3.9 billion budget for the program, only slightly above last year's level and more than \$1.8 billion below the Admin-

istration's request.

The action appeared to indicate a continuing reluctance within Congress to provide the kind of large, steady increases that Caspar W. Weinberger, who ended his term as Defense Secretary yesterday, has said are necessary to reach a decision in the next four years about whether to deploy the system.

\$2 Billion a Year

The council study, in contrast, calls for about \$2 billion a year, with increases "determined by research results, rather than a pre-set agenda," said Alice Tepper Marlin, who heads the council. That spending level, council officials said, would hedge against Soviet advances in parallel research.

"No price would be too high for a system which could actually make nuclear

weapons 'impotent and obsolete,'" said Ms. Marlin, quoting the goal Mr. Reagan set for the program. "But since the President gave his 'Star Wars' speech four years ago, it has become apparent that his enticing vision contrasts sharply with the technical and strategic objectives that actually guide S.D.I.: A crash program that aims at rush deployment of a partial defense of silo-based missiles."

The Strategic Defense Initiative Organization said yesterday that its officials had not yet seen the report. But its conclusions run counter to several arguments the Administration has made to promote the program. For example, the Council dismisses Pentagon assertions that the program is needed to counter an advanced strategic defense program in the Soviet Union.

The Washington Post
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Date 18 Nov 87

AS PUBLISHED